

TOWN OF MANSFIELD
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING
MAY 12, 2015
MANSFIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

Town Clerk Mary Stanton called the Annual Town Meeting for Budget Consideration to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Mansfield Middle School Auditorium. The Town Clerk read the Notice and Warning of the Meeting and explained the eligibility requirements for voting. She then requested nominations for Moderator.

Elizabeth Paterson nominated Ron Schurin to serve as Moderator. Hearing no other nominations, the nominations were closed. Motion to approve Mr. Schurin as Moderator passed unanimously.

Without objection Town Clerk Mary Stanton was appointed secretary to the meeting and Town Attorney Kevin Deneen was appointed as the parliamentarian. A request to adopt Roberts Rules of Order was approved without objection with the stipulation that following the calling of the question those in line to speak to the motion will have the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Schurin introduced the Chair of the Council's Finance Committee Bill Ryan and Mansfield Board of Education's Chair Randy Walikonis to present a more detailed explanation of the budget.

Councilor Ryan reviewed the General Fund Budget including the general government expenditure trends and cost drivers and the projected revenues. Mr. Ryan presented information on the positive revenue impact of the Storrs Center project and the state funding impacts that have yet to be determined.

Board of Education Chair Randy Walikonis spoke to the concerns the Board of Education worked to incorporate into the budget including maintaining or lowering class size, maintain program breadth, and the implementation of mandated programs. Mr. Walikonis reviewed the budgets since 2003 and stated that the proposed 4.0% increase for the FY 2015/2016 budget will begin to bring the education funding back to where it was before the recession.

Mr. Ryan reviewed highlights of the Capital Fund and the Capital Non-Recurring Fund. In summary, Mr. Ryan noted the tax impact on the median single family residence, following revaluation, would be \$49.00 less.

Mr. Ryan offered the following resolutions for consideration:

RESOLVED: That the proposed General Fund Budget for the Town of Mansfield for fiscal year July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016 in the amount of \$38,553,720 which proposed budget was adopted by the Council on April 28, 2015, be adopted and

that the sums estimated and set forth in said budget be appropriated for the purpose indicated.

RESOLVED: That in accordance with the Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-51, the proportionate share for the Town of Mansfield of the annual budget for Regional School District No.19 shall be added to the General Fund Budget appropriation for the Town of Mansfield for fiscal year July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016 and said sums shall be paid by the Town to the Regional School District as they become available.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Capital Projects Budget for fiscal year July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016 in the amount of \$2,438,900 be adopted provided that the portion proposed to be funded by bonds or notes shall, at the appropriate times, be introduced for action by the Town Council subject to a vote by referendum as required by Section 407 of the Town Charter.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Capital and Non-Recurring Reserve Fund Budget for fiscal year July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016 in the amount of \$2,200,470 be adopted.

The motion was seconded.

Moderator Ron Schurin outlined the process for proposing amendments to the proposed budget and the voting process. Mr. Schurin asked for comments on the budget.

Noah Lerman, Mount Hope Road, moved that all votes on matters of substance (i.e. increase/decrease to the budget) be taken by a written vote/ballot.

The motion was seconded. A voice vote on the motion was challenged but following the subsequent standing vote the Moderator declared the motion defeated.

Carla Kelly, Mount Hope Road, questioned the budget approval process in the Town Charter and asked for clarification as to whether or not the referendum is binding if the budget is defeated at said referendum.

Town Attorney Kevin Deneen stated that according to the Charter the question on the budget is binding and if the budget is defeated the Town Council then must adopt a substitute budget. There are also two advisory questions on the referendum ballot.

Toni Moran, a member of the Town Council, commented on the Town Council's actions following the defeat of the budget at the referendum in a previous year. The budget was reduced and the Council did respond to the results of the referendum.

Ric Hossack, Middle Turnpike, stated that the referendum is not mandatory but must be petitioned as was done two years ago. He stated that tonight is the night to vote on the budget.

Virginia Raymond, Town Council member and Maple Road resident, stated that people are frustrated and want their vote to count. Ms. Raymond requested a straight forward answer on the original question.

A point of order was raised questioning the relevancy of the comments. The Moderator responded that the comments are in response to the underlying questions and will be allowed.

Arthur Smith, Mulberry Road, spoke about the uncertainties facing the Town and asked that facts be considered. Mr. Smith questioned the proposed new positions in the budget.

Tom Levine, Thomas Road, thanked the Town Council and Board of Education for their work noting we are all products of the education we receive. Mr. Levine pointed out that the last few education budgets have been losses which will make a difference to our children. Mr. Levin moved that the General Fund Education budget (program #60001) be increased by \$184,800. (intent to reinstate math and language arts coordinators)

The motion was seconded.

Tutita Casa, Maple Road, spoke in support of reinstating the positions and commented on the value of consultants in the current educational climate.

Cynara Stites, Sycamore Drive asked how the increase would affect the mill rate and whether the Board of Education has the ability to use the increase in funds as they see fit.

The Town Manager replied that the increase in the mill rate would be .18 mills and the Moderator answered that since only the bottom line of the Education budget is able to be amended the Board of Education is not bound by the stated intent of the increase.

Ric Hossack, Middle Turnpike, spoke against the motion since the educational system in Town is good and stated that there comes a point where, because of the Minimum Budget Requirement, it will no longer be sustainable. He suggested the Board of Education find some way to pay for the positions without increasing the budget.

Betsy McCoach, Jacobs Hill Road, moved to amend the motion by changing the proposed increased amount to \$92,400, which takes into account the funds already in the budget for the curriculum director. The motion was seconded.

This was accepted as a friendly amendment by the maker and seconder. The motion now reads, "Move that the General Fund Education budget (program #60001) be increased by \$92,400." (intent to reinstate math and language arts coordinators)

Stephen Feathers, Gurleyville Road, asked if the position changes were due to budgetary concerns or educational concerns.

Mr. Walikonis stated that both reasons were considered.

A point of order was raised as to the intent of the friendly amendment. The maker of the motion clarified that the intent is as stated in the amended amendment.

Paul Shapiro, Council member and Davis Road resident but speaking as a private individual, urged the meeting to vote down the amendment and allow the new superintendent and the Board of Education to make the decision. Mr. Shapiro discussed the Minimum Budget Requirement limitations and declining school enrollment.

Doug Casa, Maple Road, spoke in support of the amendment noting that education is changing and stated that no teacher can be an expert in all fields and therefore it is important to provide the support they need. Mr. Casa also commented on the deplorable condition of the schools.

Jason Courtmanche, Stonemill Road, asked for clarification as to whether the amendment under consideration would eliminate the curriculum director in favor of both a math and language art coordinator or allow the Board of Education and the new superintendent to make the decision. Mr. Courtmanche is in favor of the amendment.

Annie Perkins, Storrs Road resident and a science teacher, stated that the expertise required to teach the new standards of any subject is phenomenal and supports the need for the two recommended positions.

Arthur Smith, Mulberry Road, spoke to the cost of catastrophic insurance and other benefits for additional employees and spoke against adding new employees.

Gregory Samuels, Wormwood Hill Road, stated that the Minimum Budget Requirement will never go down even as enrollment declines. Mr. Samuel spoke to the technology available in the classrooms and believes cuts can be made.

Shannon Sion, Stafford Road commented that her son's first grade class has 22 students and that we have been cutting the budget in many areas for years. Ms. Scion stated that there are many items, like school busses, for which additional funds could be spent.

Esther Soffer Roberts, Hanks Hill Road, remarked that many of the smart boards and other technologies in the classroom are a result of PTO fundraising activities. Ms. Soffer Roberts spoke to the importance of subject-specific coordinators.

Richard Weyel, Baxter Road resident and a teacher, stated that previously flat lined budgets have left the schools in the situation that staff often has to pay for supplies out of their own pockets. Mr. Weyel spoke in support of the amendment.

Brian Coleman, Centre Street, reported that children can drop out of common core. Mr. Coleman stated that this is not the time to increase the budget and that we should wait for the new superintendent to get the budget back in shape.

Martin Sommer, Warrenville Road, stated that there is nothing more important in our community than education and asked for support for the awesome schools in Mansfield.

A motion to call the question was made by Ben Shaiken. The motion was seconded.

Carla Kelly, Mount Hope Road, asked those present to consider all residents of Mansfield and many of the elderly whose resources are limited. Ms. Kelly suggested the schools explore other options.

The Moderator asked for a vote on calling the question which passed on a voice vote.

A voice vote on the amendment, as amended, was inconclusive. A standing vote determined the motion passed.

Charles Dainton, Mansfield City Road, asked for the definition of a median priced home.

Town Manager Matt Hart reported that a median priced home at a 70% assessment is valued at \$156,000.

Gregory Samuels, Wormwood Hill Road, questioned the increase in the police services budget and asked if the number of troopers could be lowered. Mr. Samuels moved to reduce police services (program #21200) by \$60,000.

The motion was seconded.

Town Manager Matt Hart reported that the \$60,000 in the budget is due to the new contract not an increase in staffing.

Mr. Samuels adjusted his motion to reduce police services (program #21200) by \$110,000. The motion was seconded.

Ric Hossack, spoke in support of the motion in order to send Hartford a message.

John Hand, Bundy Lane, noted that there had been a rash of break-ins in his neighborhood and is not in favor of the motion. Mr. Hand thanked the Council for the budget.

Toni Moran, Town Council member and Mansfield City Road resident, commented that several years ago the Town did a study of police services and determined that most residents wanted 24/7 in-town coverage. This coverage would require 13 troopers. The current number of troopers is 10 which is also what the proposed budget provides for. She opposes the motion.

Brian Anderson, Ridge Road, called the question. The motion was seconded.

Doug Casa, Maple Road, requested the level of service not be dropped.

Judy Stein, Mansfield City Road, is not in favor of decreasing the number of troopers. Ms. Stein stated that problems often arise when service levels are decreased.

Arthur Smith, Mulberry Road, stated that the numbers are misleading as UConn has increased the number of UConn police. Mr. Smith commented on the package store across from the high school.

The motion to call the question passed on a voice vote.

The motion to amend the amended motion by reducing the police services (program #21200) by \$110,000 failed.

A motion to call the basic question was offered and seconded

Mr. Schurin stated that those in line to speak to the motion would be able to speak.

Ric Hossack stated he would like to make a motion.

Mr. Schurin asked the parliamentarian if an additional motion could be entertained.

Attorney Deenen stated that the motion to call the question takes priority, but if the motion is defeated additional motions would be able to be offered.

Mr. Hultgren the next person in line to speak called the question on the motion offered by Mr. Ryan, as amended. The motion was seconded.

The approval of the motion to call the underlying question as amended was not discernable by a voice. The Moderator requested a standing vote. The Moderator declared the motion approved by the requisite 2/3 vote.

Questions were raised as to the whether the motion to call the question was properly made.

In a point of order Mr. Clouette stated that a motion to appeal the ruling of the Chair was in order if someone disagreed with the results.

Mr. Hossack moved to appeal the ruling of chair that the motion to call the question was appropriate. The motion was seconded.

Mr. Smith, Mulberry Road, stated that heckling and bullying is the way politics is done in Mansfield and commented that Roberts Rules of Order have been violated.

Lon Hultgren, Wildwood Road, stated that Mr. Hossack had already spoken on the underlying motion but that he had not. According to the rules set forth those who had yet to speak were to be recognized prior to those who had.

Moderator Schurin reiterated his stipulation to Roberts Rules of Order noting that there was no discussion of an additional motion superseding a motion to call the question.

A motion to call the question regarding overturning the ruling of the Moderator was made and seconded.

Martin Sommer, Warrenton Road, commented the discussion was not within the bounds of Roberts Rules of Order.

Jeannette Picard, Timber Drive, expressed her embarrassment for the Town given the actions of some at the meeting noting that the Moderator volunteers his time to work for us and all should be civil.

The motion to call the question on overturning the ruling of the Moderator was approved.

The motion to appeal the ruling of the Moderator was defeated.

The Moderator called for a vote on the underlying motion offered by Mr. Ryan, as amended.

The vote was by paper ballot.

Those in favor were 223 and those opposed were 69. The budget passed.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made and seconded. The motion passed at 9:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Stanton, Town Clerk

